

ELIJAH FAINTING**NO. 2725****A SERMON****INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 5, 1901****DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON****ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 1, 1880**

*“He himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree:
and he requested for himself that he might die;
and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.”
1 Kings 19:4*

WHEN we read the Scriptures in our youth, we are often astonished at the peculiar conditions in which we find even good men. It is difficult for us to understand why David could be in such sore distress and why such a man as Elijah could be so dreadfully downcast. As we get older and become more experienced, as trials multiply around us and our inner life enters upon a sterner conflict, as the babe grows to manhood and therefore is entrusted with heavier tasks, we can better understand why God allowed His ancient servants to be put into such peculiar positions, for we find ourselves in similar places and we are relieved by discovering that we are walking along a path which others have traversed before us.

It might puzzle us to tell why Elijah should get under a juniper bush. We can understand his attitude on Mount Carmel and comprehend his hewing the prophets of Baal in pieces, but we ask, in perplexity, “What are you doing here, Elijah, under a juniper or away there in a cave on the hillside?” But when we get under the juniper ourselves, we are glad to recall the fact that Elijah once sat there. And when we are hiding away in the cave, it is a source of comfort to us to remember that such a man as this great prophet of Israel was there before us. The experience of one saint is instructive to others. Many of those Psalms which are headed, “Maschil,” or instructive Psalms, record the experience of the writer and therefore become the lesson book for others.

I may be, at this time, addressing some of the Lord’s children who have prayed Elijah’s prayer. I know one who, in the bitterness of his soul, has often prayed it, and if God the Comforter shall guide me, I may be able to say something that shall help such a one in this his time of trial. If I should be permitted to come as God’s angel to smite some sleeper on the side and wake him up to eat of spiritual meat which shall cause him to forget his sorrow, it shall be well. I will, first, speak about *Elijah’s weakness*. And then, in the second place, about *God’s tenderness to him*.

I. First, I am going to speak about ELIJAH’S WEAKNESS.

Only a few days before, he had stood on Mount Carmel as the mighty prophet of God, and had brought down first fire and then water from heaven—he seemed to have the very keys of the skies and to be girt almost with omnipotence to do whatever he would when he lifted up his voice in prayer. Yet, soon after, he was fleeing from the face of Jezebel, lest she should take him and put him to death. And here we find him, after a long flight in the wilderness, sitting down under a juniper bush, seeking to find a scanty shelter there and entreating that he may die. How came all this about?

Well, the first reason is, that *he was a man of like passions with ourselves*. I suppose that the apostle James would hardly have said that concerning him if he had not perceived its truth in this particular instance. We used to have, in England a great leader who is still called, “The Iron Duke.” I think we might have called Elijah, “The Iron Prophet.” He seemed to leap into the field of action like a lion from the forest. What strength and courage he had! He seemed to have nothing of the timidity, and trembling,

and weakness of ordinary manhood. He was a very athlete in the service of God, girding up his loins and running before Ahab's chariot.

Yet here we see that he was indeed a man of like passions with ourselves. He, too, could be impatient. He, too, could be petulant. He, too, could grow weary of his appointed service, and ask to be allowed to die. You have often heard me say that the best of men are but men at the best. The other day somebody wrote me a letter to tell me that sentence was not true. All I could reply was, "No doubt, my good friend, you know yourself and if, at your best, you are not a man, I do not know what you are—you must be something worse." And there I left him.

But I believe that when a man is as good as he can be, he is still only a man—and as a man, while he is here, he is compassed with infirmities. Elijah was not only a man of passions, but a man of like passions with ourselves—a man who could suffer, and suffer intensely, one whose spirit could be depressed even to the very uttermost, just as the spirit of any one of us might be. He failed, as all God's people have done. I scarcely know of any exception in all the biographies of the Old or New Testament.

Elijah failed in the very point at which he was strongest, and that is where most men fail. In Scripture, it is the wisest man who proves himself to be the greatest fool. Just as the meekest man, Moses, spoke hasty and bitter words. Abraham failed in his faith and Job in his patience. So, he who was the most courageous of all men fled from an angry woman. He could stand face to face with that woman's husband and say to him, in answer to his false accusation, "I have not troubled Israel; but you, and your father's house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and you have followed Baalim."

Yet he was afraid of Jezebel and he fled from her, and suffered such faintness of heart that he even "requested for himself that he might die." This was, I suppose, to show us that Elijah was not strong by nature, but only in the strength imparted to him by God. So that, when the divine strength was gone, he was of no more account than anybody else. When grace is for a time withdrawn, the natural Elijah is as weak as any other natural man. It is only when supernatural power is working through him that he rises out of himself—and so the grace of God is glorified in him.

It is some comfort to us when we see that we are not the only persons who have failed through the infirmity of the flesh. I do not hold up Elijah's passions as any excuse for us indulging them, but if any are almost driven to despair because such passions have overcome them, let them shake off that despair. Nobody doubts that Elijah was a child of God. Nobody questions the fact that God loved him even when he sat fainting under the juniper tree, for He manifested special love to him then—so let no despondent heart, no broken spirit, no discouraged soul say,

*"My God hath forsaken me quite,
My God will be gracious no more;"—*

for it is not true. The Lord did not forsake Elias and He will not forsake you if you trust in Him. Yet it may be that both you and Elijah have cherished passions of which He does not approve.

But next, let us notice that this faintness of heart of Elijah was, no doubt, *the result of a terrible reaction which had come upon his whole frame*. On that memorable day when all Israel was gathered together, and he stood forth as a lone man to champion the cause of JEHOVAH, having the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of the groves in opposition to him, there must have been a strong excitement upon him. You can see that he was not very calm when the two altars stood side by side and the prophets of Baal from morning till noon cried in vain, "O Baal, hear us."

Somehow, I like to think of Elijah in the splendid furor of his soul, mocking them, and saying, "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." And in their fanaticism, they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets.

Elijah's blood was up to fever heat, his whole soul was aroused, and he scoffed at and scorned those who could worship anything except the one true God. And what a time of excitement that must have been when he bade the people go and fetch water from the sea, and pour it on the bullock and the wood lying upon JEHOVAH's altar. When they had done as he bade them, he said, "Do it the second time." And then, "Do it the third time."

And then, when the water ran round about the altar and filled the trench as well, he prayed, and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and said, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God."

I suppose that Elijah had no trembling while the issue of the conflict was in suspense. I expect that he felt the utmost assurance that the fire would come down, but even that confidence must have been accompanied by a wonderful excitement of spirit while he stood gazing up into heaven, and crying to God to send the fire as His answering signal from the sky. I can imagine, too, the intense delight and the holy triumph of the prophet when it came, and I can conceive how the grand prophetic frenzy came upon him, making him to become both judge and executioner as he exclaimed, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape."

Then, when he had executed the stern vengeance of God upon them, he had to go up to the top of Carmel and pray for the rain. That was another season of intense strain upon his mind. And when he had sent to Ahab the message, "Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not," the old prophet did what must have been very unusual for a man of his age and position, for he girded up his loins, and ran, like a footman, before the king, to prove his loyalty. So I do not wonder that when the day's work was done, he was very weary. And when the news came that Jezebel had determined to put him to death, his heart sank within him. As he had risen high, so he fell low. As he had soared, he must descend.

It seems to be the way with us all—we must pay the price for any joy that we experience. We cannot have great exhilaration without having some measure of depression afterwards. Do not condemn yourself if this is your lot. Do not excuse yourself if there is any measure of unbelief mingled with your depression, but do not condemn yourself for what is really as natural a result as the retirement of the sea after its waves have kissed the cliff. It must be so—night must follow day, winter must succeed to summer—and joyful spirits that rise aloft must sink again.

We may sometimes wish that we could always keep on the level ground where some of our dear friends live. I have often envied them, especially when I have been down in the dumps. But when I have again ascended to the heights, I have not envied them in the least. At such times, I would have pulled them up with me if it had been possible, but that I could not do. So, dear friend, you may depend upon it that you cannot be Elijah upon Carmel without the probability that you will be Elijah under a juniper bush before long. The great prophet of fire proves himself to be only a man, after all—and in the time of testing, you also will be as weak as other men.

Another reason for the prophet's depression was, no doubt, *his intense love to God and his grievous disappointment with the people*. He had hoped that the test he had proposed would decide the great question, "If JEHOVAH be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." He had staked everything upon that one issue, "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God." And he had proved to a demonstration that JEHOVAH was God. Israel ought to have renewed her covenant and to have returned to the God of her fathers there and then, but that wicked woman Jezebel had power over the people and as long as she ruled the court, and the court ruled the nation, the cause of God could not come to the front.

Elijah could not endure that and I think that the heaviest sorrows to a really gracious heart are the sins of the times, the transgressions of the multitude, the national sins that bite like asps into an earnest soul, especially if you have done something, or have seen it done by others which ought to have ended the discussion and settled the matter once for all.

Sometimes, when we have trusted in God and He has wrought a great deliverance, and when this has been done before the eyes of men who, if it had not been wrought, would have denied God's existence or power, we have been disappointed to find that they did not candidly go the other way and say, "Since God has done this, we are bound to admit that there is power in prayer, and that God's promises in the Scriptures are not a dead letter."

No, my brethren, they would not be convinced, even though God should rend the azure sky and put out His own right hand visibly before them. They would still say, "There is no God," and they would talk of the phenomenon which they had seen, and no doubt, interpret it upon some natural or scientific principles so as to fritter the whole thing away.

This kind of conduct eats into a godly man's spirit and there is not much cause to wonder that he, who could say, "I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts," should find himself in such a state of heart that he steals right away into the wilderness and never wants to see anybody again. Have you never sighed, as did the poet Cowper,

*"O for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade;
Where rumor of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war,
Might never reach me more;"—*

or have you never used the language of David, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest"?

There was, probably, another and a minor reason for Elijah's great depression, that is, *he was very weary*. I should suppose that he had gone a very long way without resting at all. Hot foot, in hasty flight from the cruel Jezebel, he had passed through a great part of the land both of Israel and Judah, and he had gone away alone into the wilderness, so he must have been very tired. And that, of itself, would tend to the lowering of his spirits.

It is always a pity, when you are taking stock of yourself, not to consider the condition of the weather, the state of your stomach and liver, and a great many other things. Though they may seem small, yet there may be more in them than is apparent to the sight. I have known a man feel so bad that he thought he could not be a child of God, when, really, the main trouble was that he needed his dinner—for his spirits revived as soon as he had partaken of proper nourishment.

Certainly, one of the lessons that this chapter teaches us is that when we get weary, or we suffer from some disease, so that the strength of our body begins to flag, then we are apt to say,

*'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought—
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"*

Now that kind of anxiety is right enough, but sometimes the cause of it lies in some small thing, altogether apart from spiritual forces, yet something which the devil can use to torment us very much. You know how Paul was tormented by Satan, once, in a way that was very painful and trying. It was not the devil himself who came to him—it was "the messenger of Satan"—one of his errand boys. And he did not come to wound the apostle with a sword, he only came to "buffet" him, to hit him, as it were, with a gloved hand. And when he pierced him, it was only with "a thorn in the flesh."

Yet that little thing bothered the apostle so much that he could not endure it, and he had to cry to God about it. He says, “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.” It often happens that some little thing like that, which really at another time we should altogether despise, may be the cause of intense depression of spirit. I know it is so and I beseech God’s children, however unusual the advice may seem, to attach some importance to it, or else they may begin condemning themselves when there is nothing to condemn and accusing themselves when they are really right with God, and all things are prospering with them.

What terrible pain you may suffer from a little speck of dust in one of your eyes! You cannot see it, but you can feel it—and the tiniest stone in your shoe, how hard it makes your walking! And other little things will, often, as in the case of the prophet’s weariness, cause grievous depression of spirit.

I must, however, point out to you that *Elijah’s prayer that he might die was a very foolish one*. Let us look at it a minute or two, and its folly will soon appear. He prayed that he might die. Why? Because he was afraid that he should die! That is the odd thing about his request—he was running away from Jezebel, because she had threatened to kill him, yet he prayed that he might die! This was very inconsistent on his part, but we always are inconsistent when we are unbelieving.

There is nothing in the world more ridiculous than unbelieving fears. If we could but see them as we shall see them one day, when faith is strong and we get into clearer light, we should laugh at ourselves and then weep over ourselves to think that we should be so foolish. You run away from death and then ask that you may die—that is what Elijah did, so it is no cause for wonder if poor ordinary mortals, such as we are, act in the same fashion as this great prophet of God did.

Further, it was great folly for him to wish to die, because there was more need, even according to his own account, that he should continue to live then than there ever had been before. What did he say? “I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.” But Elijah, if you die, there will be an end of the Lord’s people, if your reckoning is correct. Surely, if you are the only one left, you ought to pray that you may live on until there are some more to carry on the work. It is a pity that the coal of Israel should be utterly quenched and that the last lamp should be put out.

The reason that the prophet gave for wanting to die was the very best reason he could have given for wanting to live. That is strange, but we are very strange creatures. There is not a man here who is not foolish at times—certainly, he who is in the pulpit takes precedence of you all in that respect—we all, some time or other, let out the folly that is in us, and we only need to be driven up into a corner, as Elijah was, and our folly will be discovered as was his. He ought to have prayed to live, yet he prayed that he might die.

Another thing that proves his folly is that he never was to die at all, and he never did die, for he went up by a whirlwind into heaven. It is a remarkable fact that he who prayed that he might die is one of the two men who o’erleaped the ditch of death and entered into life without dying. I wonder whether, as he rode to heaven in that chariot of fire, Elijah said to himself, “Why, I am the man who prayed that I might die!” If he did, he must have smiled with holy wonder that God did not take him at his word and with sacred pleasure that his prayer was left unanswered.

It was a petition that never ought to have been presented, and you and I, beloved, often have good reason to thank God that He does not answer our prayers, and we may sing with quaint Ralph Erskine,

*“I’m heard when answer’d soon or late;
And heard when I no answer get.
Yea, kindly answer’d when refus’d,
And friendly treat when harshly used.”*

So was it with the prophet Elijah—God answered him by not answering him, because He had in store for him some better thing than he had asked.

Note, also, that *the reason Elijah gave for his prayer was an untrue one*. He said, “It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life.” But it was not enough, he had not done enough for his Lord. He thought that he had. He imagined that he had gone to the very verge of his capacity. He had exalted God in the midst of the people and put the whole nation to a crucial test, so he said, “It is enough. I can do no more.”

But he had a great deal more to do. He had to go down to Naboth’s vineyard and charge Ahab with the guilt of Naboth’s death. He had to rebuke the idolatry of Ahaziah and above all, he had to call out his successor, who would keep the prophetic lamp burning in the midst of Israel. Elijah said, “It is enough,” yet it was not enough even for his own enjoyment, for the Lord had more blessings in store for him.

And you and I, beloved, have often felt that we have been, like Naphtali, “satisfied with favor and full with the blessing of the Lord,” yet the Lord has given us still richer favors and choicer blessings. It was so with Elijah, for he was to have that wonderful revelation of God on Mount Horeb. He had more to enjoy and the later life of Elijah appears to have been one of calm communion with his God. He seems never to have had another fainting fit, but to the end his sun shone brightly without a cloud. So it was not enough, how could he know that it was? It is God alone who knows when we have done enough and enjoyed enough, but we do not know.

Elijah also said, “O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.” But that was probably no more true than was the other reason that he gave for wishing to die. We do not know anything about his father or any of his ancestors, but it is not likely that any one of them was at all comparable to him. Elijah was a grand man, a truly great man. God had favored him far beyond his fathers and intended to still do so. He was a man who walked altogether on a higher path than the rest of his fellows, and while it was well for him to be humble, it was not well for him to be so humble as to forget the great things that God had done for him.

Come, then, my dear brother or sister, if you are sitting under your juniper tree and saying, “Let me die, for it is enough,” correct your foolish request—examine the reason that suggests it and you will find it too weak to justify such a desire. So may God help you to abandon it at once!

II. Now, in the second place, it is a very pleasing task to speak for a few minutes upon GOD’S TENDERNESS TO ELIJAH IN THIS TIME OF WEAKNESS.

It is always well for ministers, and all who have the care of souls, to watch how God deals with those who are in trouble, just as a young surgeon, when he walks the hospital, is eager to see how a master in the healing art treats his patients.

The first thing that God did with Elijah was a very simple thing, *he let him sleep*. There is the poor prophet down in the dumps—he wants to die, but the Lord lets him sleep instead—and he slept soundly, too, for he needed an angel to wake him, and soon he fell asleep again, and a second time he had to be awakened. Rest was the one thing that he most needed, so, by—

“Tired nature’s sweet restorer, balmy sleep,”—

God gave His servant rest. Some people do not seem to think that the Lord’s servants need any rest. They want us to be always at work, fulfilling this engagement and that. But this is the way to bring us quickly to our graves. Yet we do not serve a hard Master—His church is often thoughtless and unkind, but He never is, so He gave His servant Elijah the sleep that he most of all needed just then.

What was the next thing that God did? It seems a very small matter, yet it was the best thing he could do for Elijah. That is, *the Lord fed him*. When the angel awakened him, “He looked, and behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.”

Now, I am afraid that if you and I had been there, we should have begun talking to Elijah and have worried the poor man by telling him how wrongly he had been acting. Instead of doing that, the angel let him have a cake and then let him go back to sleep. That was the best way of caring for him—and there is

many a hungry and weary child of God who needs food and rest more than anything else. The spirit needs to be fed and the body needs feeding also.

Do not forget these matters. It may seem to some people that I ought not to mention such small things as food and rest, but these may be the very first elements in really helping a poor depressed servant of God. It is not surprising that God becomes Cake-Maker to His children, for we know that He is their Bed-Maker. David said, concerning the man who considers the poor, “The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.”

There is nothing that is really necessary or beneficial which God will not do for His children. If they serve Him so zealously that they get banged up in His service, he will care for them and bring them round again, for He knows how to do it. And very likely, like Elijah, they shall have their sleep first and then their cake.

The next comfort that Elijah had was *blessed nursing*. He had an angelic visitor to keep him company. The angel came to him and delivered the Lord’s message, “Arise: eat.” He only uttered two words, but two words from an angel are better than a great many from some other persons. “Arise: eat.” That was God’s message to Elijah and beloved, it is very sweet when God lets His servants know that His angels are round about them, encompassing them, taking care of them, as when Jacob was met at Mahanaim by the host of God and was comforted before he met his brother Esau. And many weary ones still find that God’s angelic messengers are round about them, so that they should not be left alone in the time of their trial.

The next thing that God did for Elijah, after He had allowed him to finish his journey and get to Horeb, was that *He permitted him to tell his grief*. You may have noticed that he told the story twice. He knew what he was grieving about, so he stated it very definitely—and the Lord allowed him to tell it. It is often a wonderful relief to be able to tell out your grief, to pull up the sluices and let the waters of sorrow run away. If no one but God shall hear it—if no human ear should listen to your complaining—yet it is a very sweet thing to unburden your heart. One hymn-writer says,

*“Bear and forbear, and silent be;
Tell no man thy misery”—*

but I am not sure about the wisdom of that advice. At any rate, tell it to God, for He allowed His poor servant Elijah to pour out into His ear the sad tale of his woe.

This done, the Lord helped to restore His servant *by revealing Himself and revealing His ways to him*. He made Elijah see that God is not so apparent in terrific agencies as in quieter forms, that He does not always accomplish His purposes by earthquake and fire. The Lord let him see that “a still small voice” was being heard throughout Israel, although the prophet thought that no good had come of his testimony. And thus he was cheered.

Next, *the Lord gave him good news*. He told Elijah that he still had seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal—and that revelation still further cheered the prophet’s heart. Then the Lord did what perhaps was best of all for Elijah, *He gave him some more work to do*. He sent him off about his Master’s business again and I guarantee you that when Elijah went back over that road, it was with a very different step from that which brought him down to Beer-sheba.

He had come along terrified and distressed, but now he goes back with the majesty that belongs to the Tishbite—he is afraid of no Jezebel now. He calls out Elisha to be his successor and he denounces Ahab—and does it bravely and boldly—and no one hears of his wanting to hide away again. God had brought His servant up out of his depression, in the way I have described, and he never went back again to that sad condition.

Now I come to the practical conclusion of the matter which is this. Let us learn from Elijah’s experience, first, that it is very seldom right for us to pray that we may die. It was not right for Elijah

and it is very seldom right for anybody to do so. It is never right for any of you, whose death would be your eternal ruin, to wish to die.

Perhaps I am addressing some unconverted people who, in their impatience against God, have wished to die. What would you have gained by death? That day would be all darkness and not light to you. It would devour you as stubble. For any man to lay violent hands on himself in order to escape from trouble is the maddest of all actions. It is leaping into the fire to escape the sparks—casting yourself into hell in order to avoid some temporary depression of spirit. Oh, if you are ever tempted in that way, God grant you grace at once to say, “Get thee behind me, Satan!”

Even if you feel a desire to die in order to get out of this world of misery, crush it down. If you are an unconverted man, whatever the misery of this world is, it is nothing compared with the misery of the world to come. It is far better to bear the ills you have than to fly to others that you know not of—even common sense should teach you that.

As for the man of God, it is seldom, if ever, that he should get into such a state of heart as to wish for death. I know, beloved, that we may sometimes very properly desire death. When we have had a more than usually clear sight of Christ, we have longed to be with Him. May not the bride desire to be perpetually in the Bridegroom’s company? When sacred song has sometimes carried us, on its bright wings of silver, up into the clear atmosphere that is round about the gates of heaven, we have wished to enter—we have longed that we might see our God.

I have no doubt it is right enough, when we are wearied, to wish for the everlasting rest. When we are conscious of sin, it is right enough to wish to be where sin can never come and temptation can never more annoy. There must be such wishes. There must be such aspirations, for, to depart and to be with Christ is far better than to abide here.

But we must never get into such a craving and longing for heaven that we are not content to bide our time here. We do not like men who work for us to be always looking for Saturday night to come. And there are some Christians who are always wanting their Saturday night to arrive. Be willing to do a good day’s work, to do a good week’s work, and then the Sabbath will be all the sweeter to you when you get up—

*“Where congregations ne’er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end.”*

How long you and I are to be here, is no concern of ours. After all, we are not our own masters—we are our Lord’s servants. If He thinks we can glorify Him better here than there, it must be our choice to remain here. I remember a good woman, to whom the question was put when she was very sick, and very full of pain, “Do you wish to die or to live?” She answered, “I wish to have no wish about the matter, but to leave it in the hands of God.” “But suppose the Lord Jesus Christ were to say to you, ‘You are to have whichever you wish’? What would you choose?” She said, “I would ask Him to decide for me, but I would not like to have my choice.”

You see, if we were dying and we said, “This is our own choice,” we should lack some comfort which we might otherwise have had. But when we feel, “It was no choice of ours, it was the choice of God that we should die,” then it is sweet. And if you live, you can say, “I am not living now in answer to an impatient cry of mine—I am living because God willed it and there is a purpose to be served by it,” and then it is sweet to live. So leave the matter alone, dear friend, and let the Lord do as He wills with you.

Elijah wished to die and prayed an unwise prayer, but our blessed Master said to His Father, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt,” and in all the throes of His death-agony, there was not a syllable of impatience, but a perfect resignation to the will of God. That is the first practical lesson.

And the second is that whenever we do wish to die, we must take care that it is from the very best of motives and that there is no selfishness in it—no wish to escape from suffering or from service, but we must wish to depart to be with Christ because it is far better.

*“Let me be with Thee where Thou art,
My Savior, my eternal rest!
Then only will this longing heart
Be fully and forever blest.”*

And lastly, there is one more practical lesson for us to learn—that is, you and I have not the slightest idea of what is in store for us on earth. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” up yonder. And you do not know what He has prepared for you even here.

Elijah says, “Let me die.” But Elijah, would you not like to live to veil your face in the presence of God on Horeb? “Oh, yes!” he would say, “let me live till then.” And Elijah, would you not like to live to rebuke Ahab for his sin against Naboth? “Oh, yes! I should like to live till then.” Would you not like to live till you have cast your mantle over that blessed servant of God, Elisha, who is to succeed you? “Oh, yes!” he would say, “let me live till then.”

And would you not like to live, Elijah, till you have seen the schools of the prophets, raised by your influence, which shall live, after both you and Elisha are gone, to keep alive the work of God? I think I hear the old man say, “Oh, yes! Let me live till then. Happy shall I be if I can see schools instituted for the training of ministers who shall go and preach in God’s name. Yes, let me live till then.”

And you do not know, brother, how much there is for you yet to live for. And you, my sister, do not talk about dying, for you also have a great deal more to do before you get to heaven, service for your Savior that will make heaven all the better when you get there. God has such blessings in store for some of you that, when they come to you, you will be like men that dream, and your mouth shall be filled with laughter, and your tongue with singing, and you will say, “The Lord has done great things for us; whereof we are glad.”

Wherefore, be of good courage and strengthen your hearts, and wait still upon the Lord until He comes. And may His blessing be with you forever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—196, 686, 116 (Song 1)

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.